MODERNIST STUDIES IN THE LIFE OF JESUS

RAY O. MILLER

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BY
RAY OAKLEY MILLER

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TO

MY MOTHER

A FREE AND SURE BELIEVER

INTRODUCTION

This little book is published only as a point of view. But "the point of view" is to the author's mind everything. What he does claim is that the point of view herein put forth is the point of view that men are more and more likely to take with reference to any study of the life of Jesus. Rational and scientific tests are being applied to every domain of study; and by the word "Modernist" the author simply means a use of those tests in religious thinking, not, he hopes, without a genuine sympathy for, and an appreciation and appropriation of, the fundamental elements of idealism and faith.

He dares even hope that such an attitude will make of the religion of Jesus a more vital (if radical), forward-moving, and comprehensive force in the advancement of humanity. He sincerely believes that such an attitude is in keeping with the wish of him who said, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

And, because he believes this, he thinks that

the religion of Jesus offers a more tremendous challenge and demands a more vital allegiance than any yet given. The way-out for humanity is to be found in maximums rather than minimums. It lies in the direction of progress. Its method would be as abrupt as love and righteousness. It would, perchance, have about it something of the pangs of being born, but such things would be mere incidents in a life, *divine in its very essence and eternal in its first conscious assumptions.*

RAY OAKLEY MILLER.

PREFATORY

AN AGE OF FAITH

Perhaps never before were thinking people so intent upon finding the basic principles of their religion. It is not a question of some specific dogma, or indeed of any dogma. What we are finding out is that the Church was never so weak ethically, socially, and spiritually as when her dogmas were strongest — in the Middle Ages. She was never so strong, nor so vital, a factor in the forward-moving processes of civilization as today, when her dogmas are honey-combed with analysis, modernism, and variation.

This is an age of Faith. We sometimes hear the Middle Ages referred to as "Ages of Faith." They were not at all. They were ages of unfaith, ages of dogma, when everything was fixed, static, divinely appointed. Our age is an age of Faith. It believes things. It believes in doing things. It tries out its faith.

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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM

To some the Christian life is simply imitative. There were no elements of a transient nature in Jesus, nor is any event in his life, however insignificant, to be slurred over. The incident of feet-washing is as permanent as baptism; the apocalyptic visions are as valuable as the Sermon on the Mount; and incidental expressions about the cosmogony of the universe are just as binding as the immortality of the soul. If we pick up certain books on theology, or popular sermons, there is in them all an evident "trekking" of the Bible and the life of Jesus. To all such the very mention of our subject borders on blasphemy; even the "hem of his garment" is sacred and permanent.

There are others who find the very reality and permanency of the religion of Jesus in the fact that they are mixed up with other things patently transient and even superficial. Indeed, the whole effect of Modernism has been concerned in distinguishing between these two elements in the life of Jesus, and in fitting these

permanent elements into the warp and woof of our present age. In the main, I think, the effort has been reverent and sincere, and the outcome fruitful. Religion has become less antique and more efficient, less traditional and more ethical, less burdened with mechanical theories and more dynamic. However, that depends, too! Let us begin with the transient elements.

THE WANDERLUST

The Germans have a word for those who are never able to be satisfied — wanderlust. And in a real sense, of course, we should all be taken up with the wanderlust of life. Man's is the eternal struggle. He it is who never yet has found the end of the rainbow.

> The restlessness of life is life,
> The heritage of every soul.
> 'Tis this that differentiates
> A man from beast —
> The ceaseless struggle for a goal.

But in another sense this wanderlust is both wrong and foolish. Just to wander for the sake of going, to imagine that all we are doing here today is dross, and that somewhere tomorrow, in some new luxury, in some new work, at the end of the rainbow, is to be found what we seek, is both futile and foolish. Drop down your buckets where you are, good friend; drink the refreshing waters of home and love and work; for the day will surely come to all of us when that which once seemed commonplace will be found amongst the most valued treasures of life.

CHAPTER II

THE TRANSIENT ELEMENTS IN THE LIFE OF JESUS

There are his language and his dress. Who knows in what language Jesus spoke? Some think it was Greek, others Aramaic. But what does it matter? Greek has lately been abolished from the necessary credits of the University of California. It was almost the last of the great universities to take this step. And yet it has been pointed out that at this very moment Greek culture was never so common. Our children learn the Greek myths as nursery stories, and read large portions of the noted Greek authors in grammar grades and in the high schools. The spirit of Greek is here, and nobody cares about the language as such. It is so with the language Jesus spoke. We can all agree upon this point — if no further.

When we move on to the matter of dress, it is not quite so evident a thing. Our ignorance keeps us from making the language of Jesus a permanent element in his religion, but a general knowledge of oriental dress has permitted us to

stress this point to some extent; and there are Christian bodies to whom the supposed simplicity of the dress of Jesus is important, if not categorical. And there are great bodies of Christians to whom a certain kind of dress is religious and another secular.

Moving up a step farther, we come to those notions of the physical world — what we would call the scientific ideas of his day — presumably accepted by Jesus. Are we bound to accept as an integral part of our religion the cosmogony of the Jews — their ideas of natural laws, the "four corners of the earth," etc.? Of course this comes very close to things intimately connected with the early records of Christianity — miracles, supernatural voices, ecstatic visions, as well as the flatness of the earth, and the astronomical observations of the Jews.

It is apparent, I think, that Jesus need not be loaded too heavily with this supposed phase of religion. Indeed, it seems necessary that if he was to speak to his age, he must speak in its language, through its symbols, and through its natural knowledge, however imperfect that knowledge was. Some advance the hypothesis that Jesus knew everything, but did not care to interfere with incidental things, leaving their development to natural processes. This, however, seems a little mechanical. There is noth-

ing in the words of Jesus to show that he knew any better, nor was it necessary. Spiritual truth does not depend upon any set of developing human ideas; it does depend for its propagation in each age upon the knowledge of that age. And while Jesus spoke in that age according to the cosmogony of the Jews, with its imperfect perceptions, if he were here today, he would speak according to evolution and intuition.

Almost any one of the miraculous stories would illustrate our point. There is the outstanding one of Jesus eating fish with his disciples after the resurrection. The absolute physical demonstration seemed necessary to the Jews, and, being weak in psychology, they somehow came into the conception that it was so. It is not often we ministers preach on this incident, I think, nor does it form any part of our usual consciousness. The feeding of the five thousand is usually interpreted *spiritually*, with a gloss for the miracle itself. And it is with a great deal of relief that most of us believe the Jewish cosmogony to be transient in the life of Jesus.

Then there were in Jesus ideas peculiar to Jewish thought. Here we run into difficult matters — the very heart of things — where it is imperative that we discern carefully. "My words, they are spirit and they are life," said

Jesus in many different ways. And we all believe that, only we are anxious to know what are his own words first, and then what he meant by words — the shell and symbol of his thought, or his ideas, essential and imperative.

A good deal of modern criticism has been engaged in showing that the records have been edited (which is probably true) and that certain ideas attributed to Jesus were not really held by him. That is a world of study in itself. A great part of this, it seems to me, has been pursued upon an *a priori* basis — to do away with some of these very Jewish ideas. We are always fearful of such methods as going too far and being too arbitrary.

There seems to be no reasonable doubt that Jesus used these Jewish ideas, as he used the Jewish cosmogony, as indigenous and necessary in speaking an understandable message. That, however, is quite another thing from binding them upon all succeeding ages.

The apocalyptic passages have been especially trying. Whenever a great war has come, literalistic Christians have seen in it the presaged end of the world. There are men in nearly every city of the world who have been devoting weeks to this very proposition, getting people ready quickly for the approaching end of the world! Even Cardinal Gibbons uses this historic passage to edify his flock! And

he has good precedents: St. Paul thought the same thing, and in the canonical scriptures from him we are told that the end of the world would come while some then living were still upon the earth. St. Paul's rabbinical training prepared his mind for apocalyptic receptivity, but for the rest of us that ground of excuse is not tenable.

The idea of judgment with the Jew was ineradicably wrapped up with the apocalyptic idea. Any message that would come to him with force must come in that direction. Judgment is testified to in many ways in different times. The fact itself is not less stressed today, but comes along more reasonable and evolutionary lines. The solution lies in that direction, and we may regard Jesus with no less reverence because he did what was the only sensible thing to do — used the prevailing apocalyptic notions for his own purposes.

A little lower in the scale come the less developed Jewish ideas, such as belief in devils. The Gadarene pigs are a good example of this. The psychological devils which came out of this man had, according to popular notions, to go somewhere else! And what more happy than this wild herd of pigs running pellmell into the water!

The same thing proves true even of messian-

ism, though we have not time to go into that. In each case we are helped immensely by the fact that, while using these popular theologies, Jesus himself modified them with an exceedingly free hand, hewing them to spiritual ends.

Nor are his uses of canonical Scriptures less traditional on the one hand and less drastic on the other. His application of prophecy to himself is the most eclectic thing imaginable. It was so transformed that its originators, the Jews, did not recognize it, or recognize it as anything more than duplicity.

I want to mention just one other transient phase of the life of Jesus — his partisan appeal. His whole message in its original form is to the Jews. "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs." Or again, "Go ye not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not. But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." "Go ye into all the world" is bounded thus, "Jerusalem, Judea, and the uttermost parts of the world" (a provincial view at most). This partisan spirit holds over in St. Peter, and is broken only by the essential spirit of Christianity in St. Paul, against the traditional conceptions of both St. Peter and St. James in the First Council at Jerusalem.

There can be no doubt that Jesus adapted

his message, as his life, to the Jews, leaving the leaven itself to break forth into the universalism of a world-religion.

There are other transient elements in the life of Jesus, of course, but these represent the leading principle.

SINS OF OMISSION

It is comparatively easy to see the effect of things we do; it is far more difficult to discern the influence of the things we fail to do. Yet the latter perhaps have more to do with the making or unmaking of our lives than the former. It is quite natural to worry over, and repent of, actual sins committed; it is much harder to make up for the things we have simply left undone. Yet the latter are often more accursed sources of pain than the former. It is natural to say, "I hope I shall do no great sin tomorrow"; it is far worthier to say, "I hope I shall leave no worthy thing undone tomorrow."

"Count that day lost, whose low descending sun
Sees from thy hand no worthy action done."

CHAPTER III

THE PERMANENT ELEMENTS IN THE LIFE OF JESUS

We turn now to the permanent elements. They are evident, strategic, and inspiring, scarcely needing any great amount of elucidation. He whose life has caught up to himself the great heart of the world has an intrinsic appeal like the morning light, which needs only to be seen to be appreciated.

First of all is his plan of placing the intuitive principle above the rationalistic. He is almost Bergsonian in this. That is his position about God. There is no single argument in all his life to prove that there is a God. It was to him an *intuition* and a *manifestation.* All we needed to do was to "lift up our eyes unto the hills." "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear," and similar expressions were ever upon his lips as a final thrust. He would not even use his miracles to prove the existence of God, answering a request for proof by saying that an "evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign." In other words, if the sign was not already here in the instinctive, intuitive processes of life, no miracle could ever

impress the fact. This is intuition *versus* rationalism.

That was his position, also, about himself. When pushed for the source of his claims, he always fell back upon intrinsic things in himself and the ability of others to see and understand. At the cleansing of the Temple, when the priests asked by what authority he did these things, he answered by testing their power to sense divine things: "The baptism of John, was it of men or of God?" If they said of men, then the people would be against them, for all men knew (instinctively) that John was a prophet of God. If they said of God, then Jesus would say, "Why did ye not believe him?" And they answered Jesus and said, "We cannot tell." And he answered and said unto them, "Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things." Here we find the intuitive process, based upon moral insight, as over against legalized rationalism.

Upon another occasion they ask him, "Where is thy Father?" and Jesus replies in the same spirit, "If ye had known me, ye would have known my Father also." Or again, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they will follow me"; "If any man will (or will to do) do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself."

By placing the intuitive above the rational, Jesus does not thereby ignore the rational. Again and again he disconcerts the leaders with his apt replies, his careful knowledge of detail, and his overwhelming processes of mind. "Never man spake like this man," or "Whence hath this man knowledge, never having learned his letters?" were the astonished rejoinders of worsted antagonists. What he does do is to plant his feet firmly upon the eternal verities, which may be discerned only spiritually, and from this vantage ground, supported by reason and love, walk the earth, the victor over death and the grave, to whose soul the transient was lost in the permanent, and even vicissitudes were only incidental and could be made to contribute to glory and victory.

Closely linked with these fundamental tenets was his doctrine of the fatherhood and consequent personality of God. With Jesus this was pivotal. Personality was to him, not the maximum, but the minimum. Breaking through his words many times are concepts of God in terms of cosmos, but always gathering into itself the valued attributes of self-consciousness and self-determination, the hopes and loves and realities of many years. The thin ice of immanence and pantheism are everywhere skirted with a dexterity which is the soul of truth and simplicity.

It is never the Great-soul or Over-soul. It is always God is love, but never Love is God. God is a spirit, the last word about God, yet a spirit endowed with love — active, knowing, personal. He and the Father are one; yet he is still the Son, and God the Father — both personal. The Holy Ghost is raised out of the pantheism of olden times, and is sent, a personal representative of the Son and the Father, into the hearts of men. With Jesus, the fatherhood is fatherhood, lost in neither immanence, pantheism, nor transcendentalism; rather comprehending them all in its own satisfying personal relationships. So much for this well-known phase of the life of Jesus.

Standing on the same fundamental ground is the doctrine and fact of atoning love. In the older prophets, from Amos on down, there was plenty of justice. Righteousness was demanded of the people. Jesus demanded justice for himself only on the basis of affection and intrinsic things. He drew others to secure justice for themselves according to the same great principle, until at last the great appeal was, "The love of Christ constraineth us." The greatest good was to be secured by denying one's self and taking up his cross. Not a denial of large expression of life and personality, but a holding in abeyance of one's rights in order to secure them through service and

love. Self-immolation, unknown in inanimate life, repugnant when exercised without purposes of a lofty nature, and seldom appearing in early reflective humanity, rises to its height in Jesus. In a moment of fanaticism the soldier or martyr gives his life, perchance for an imaginary good. Erasmus was perhaps wise when he said, "I have no vocation for martyrdom." Martyrdom has its glories, but its pages are ofttimes pitiful. It is almost inconceivable how men could have died for some of the things for which they gave their lives.

The death of Jesus was more than martyrdom. It was an atonement, an at-one-ment. Clear and definite were the purposes which actuated his whole life. It was not difficult for him to see the cross looming up before him. His ideals were as inexorable as life, and God must give his expression of vicarious love. The world must be anchored. It must be overwhelmed by the great goodness and love of God, as well as by his righteousness and justice. Self-immolation, so repulsive in most instances, becomes in Jesus the atonement — moral, just, personal.

It is said that Mr. Lincoln had great trouble with the atonement until he stood on the battlefield of Gettysburg. The men there had given themselves for others with a moral purview. Their sacrifice does give a glimpse of the vi-

carious sufferings of Jesus, but only a glimpse. Most of these men were mere youths, who had gone to war for many reasons, with little thought of sure death. A portion of them were drafted. Jesus went forth to die — clear-sighted, definitely purposeful, alone, meeting the whole matter with full consciousness and determination. He gave himself a ransom for many. Modern life and modern scholarship understand with fuller import the meaning of the atonement, with love first and justice afterward. It is a sure and abiding element in the life of Jesus, as it must always be in the life of the world.

Definitely related to this is the message of the brotherhood of man. The worth of human life is exalted, and individualism pushed forward by relationships based on personality, affection, hope, justice, righteousness: "If God so clothe the grass, which today is in the field and tomorrow is cast into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith!" "Greater love hath no man than this, that he will lay down his life for another."

Like every other great consumer of energy, brotherhood needs a dynamo. In this great day of social effort, of institutionalism, the natural store of human kindness is quickly exhausted. The need is felt for a great supply for new effort glimpsed ahead. Human kind-

ness has its limitations, and we need what is to be found in the exhaustless life of Jesus. "If any man say that he love God and hate his brother, he is a liar," is the incontrovertible dictum of Jesus.

Mention must also be made of the immortality of the soul. With Jesus it is based upon the very necessities of life — the life of the Father and the life of the individual. Like the idea of God, it, too, is intuitive and instinctive, needing no argument or logical demonstration. It is as natural as breathing air, or appropriating sunlight. "This is eternal life, to know thee, the only true God." It is shrouded in no mystery, nor even in the half-knowledge of St. Paul ("Now we know in part.") It is a definite, self-conscious, forward-moving entity: "In my Father's house are many mansions"— a Father indeed, and a son indeed. "We are the sons of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be," says St. John. These are the things that make immortality worth while — a robust, confident, personal immortality.

And growing out of these comes the message of responsibility and judgment. Jesus says that he does not come to judge; and he does not, primarily. But close knit with the whole structure of his redemption is the awfulness of sin, the terrible consequence of spurning the

love of God, redeeming in its very essence. Individualism, personality, entity — all imply responsibility. Fatalism vanishes from the Christian consciousness as night before the sun. The Christian is neither stoic nor epicurean, but a responsive, participating, responsible, rational being, rooted in the life of the universe and God.

Last of all, as well as greatest of all, is the personality of Jesus himself. Back of all his humanity, and shining through all his transient modes of expression, is his own unique, enchanting, overwhelming individuality. Renan was right when he said, "If the life and death of Socrates was that of a philosopher, the life and death of Jesus of Nazareth was that of a God." His own assurance, linked with the rest of his life, is the world's greatest source of hope. His witness of himself is true. In him humanity and divinity meet and we reverently say, "*Ecce Homo! Ecce Deus!*"

THE VOLUNTARY BASIS OF RELIGION

The only things that count for much are the things we love. The only thing that can sanctify marriage is love — an abiding love. The only thing that can make a man successful in his profession is to be consumed by an affectionate interest in it. Business men are successful only when they love their business as they love their meals. And what is true about everything else in the world is true about religion. It has its reality in the voluntary basis of life, where affection simply bubbles over, and faith, like laughter, fills the air. Early Christianity was an almost voluptuous overflowing of pure and unadulterated human affection. It is something in which there can be no thought of barter, of penalty, of custom; it is in every sense its own justification, and comes very near what M. Aurelius called "pure cussedness" in the early martyrs who refused to recant, going joyously to death.

CHAPTER IV

JESUS AND AUTHORITY

"God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these latter days spoken unto us by his son."

In one sense every good doctrine is necessary in the religion of Jesus; in another sense his religion has few vital and necessary doctrines. In one way it challenges man's largest and endless study; in another way the simplest mind may learn its lessons. The life of Jesus, predominantly realistic, perhaps just because of that, reaches over in a multitude of implications into the larger or divine life. I, for one, like to think of Jesus in this paradoxical sense — on the one hand having the simplest message for children and peasant minds to understand, and on the other reaching far out into life's greatest mysteries, challenging the loftiest minds and noblest hearts. It is perhaps because our own personalities are constructed that way; we have a sense of the natural and also a sense of the supernatural. We have a sense of transient values and a sense of permanent values.

The supernatural implications in the life of Jesus, which constrain us to venerate him, are perhaps best made known through the teachings of the incarnation. Having accepted the moral grandeur of the life of Jesus, it is difficult to see how one could steer clear of some such summary of his life, answering, as it does, at the same time an instinctive need of the human heart.

Once, indeed, Jesus seemed to disparage his own place: "Call not me good, for there is none good save God." But in all other places we run into words of surprising authority. One of the first observations was that he spoke not as the Scribes, but as one having authority. The ego in Jesus either militates against his moral grandeur, or it becomes at once an implication of unique authority, and fascinating hope — that after all God has been in our midst.

There is an interesting phase of this problem in the possibility of such a revelation. Of course the man who upon *a priori* grounds does not believe it possible for God to reveal himself in this distinct and unique way, is not prepared to believe it — even though it be true. However, he who knows what God can and cannot do must be very wise.

Here we are in the midst of life's problems. We are full of questions and doubts and —

premonitions. There are many things we would like to know; there are some things we feel we must know or die. And we ask ourselves: "Is it possible for God to reveal himself to us in and through personality? He who does not believe it must almost surely do two things: First, he must dogmatize a great deal about the power of God; in a way he must arrogate to himself the ability to mark the limits of the Infinite according to his own limited or arbitrary vision. Second, he must accept life as a fragment, with its morning, its afternoon, its night. He must see consciousness dawn, grow into intelligence and — perish. He must place his friends and loved ones in the grave, and know them ever afterward only in memory, perhaps in the flowers, the grass, and the air. Is it possible that God should reveal more than this?

Does God reveal himself in the grass and the flowers? Yes. But no revelation in the grass and the flowers can ever satisfy the human consciousness and intelligence. Does God reveal himself in the stars? We think of the inscription on the tomb of Mrs. John A. Brashear, written by her astronomer husband, "We have loved the stars too much to be afraid of the night," and we reverently answer, "Yes." But even that far-away revelation could hardly be expected to satisfy a

human soul unless complemented by other elements. Does God reveal himself in brute life? Yes. But such can never complement man's spiritual needs, the great outreachings and insistent aspirations. The Chrisitian religion, therefore, following the manifest needs of human life, accepts the assumption of Jesus and insists that what is everywhere else true must also be true in the highest realm of God's expressed life — that of personality.

In what, then, shall the revelation consist? How shall God reveal himself that we may most easily comprehend his message? We answer — through a person; through one who was tempted in all points like as we are, who was anhungered, who wept, who laughed, who was strong while yet tempted. If God should ask me today how best he could make himself known to me, I would say — through a person who, coming into my actual environment, would show me the way to live. The possibility thus transforms itself into a probability.

Nor am I unaware of the other side of the problem. Men carried away with the really fine idea of Divine Immanence — that God is in everything — men who sense a cosmic supernaturalism, cannot understand how a true revelation should come through a man limited and tempted as we are. Of course God is in everything. His purposes are eternal and

through all. There is a reason even for the existence of evil, without the postulate of a personal devil. But mark this: man's need of a revelation has nothing to do with Divine Immanence. His revelation must come to him through his own nature, and answer to his own need here and now. So we must not expect Jesus to be a tree, a cloud, a planet, a sparrow, just to show us that he is immanent in everything. We know God is in everything without a revelation. Power is one of the first aspects we glimpse in the life of God. So the revelation of God in Jesus has no direct bearing on many things — science, philosophy, invention, farming. True, he has inspired and led these studies in an incidental way. But those things we are to learn for ourselves. Jesus concerned himself with the deeper needs and question of man's eternal progress and life. Nor did Jesus come to tell us everything. He would not tell his disciples all he knew. He gave the vital tendencies, the eternal principles, the moral energies, which are so simple. With Newman, Jesus would have every follower of his say:

> "I do not ask to see the distant scene;
> One step enough for me."

The final test, however, is rational and moral. As challenging as the possibility is,

and as instinctive as the need seems to be — the natural complement of all that we are — *a choice* must be made, and the choice is left to us. To whom shall we go? Where shall we find this man, God's man — yea, in a vital sense Deity himself? That is a momentous choice. You perhaps remember the story of the French atheist who, knowing the vital place of this question, asked the Cardinal: "If you ever found another man as good as Jesus, what would you do?" And the Cardinal replied, "I would worship him." The choice takes in moral grandeur as a final test. There was the discerning doubter who was asked: "Provided there is a God, and another life, if a man should live according to the spirit and precepts of Jesus, do you think he would inherit eternal life?" and who promptly answered in the affirmative. It is doubtful if a more fundamental question was ever asked, or a more satisfactory answer given. In this direction lies the quest and the decision.

The incarnation is not, as some suppose, an abstract dogma, or theory of life; nor does it assume to solve all difficulties. The incarnation has almost infinite ramifications, but primarily it is God revealing himself through a babe, a young boy, and a man. It is God in humanity speaking to humanity. And that is

not so strange a thing after all. There are some who are afraid of what they call an "anthropomorphic" God — that is, a God who is no more than a man. That is the scare that dogmatists on the one hand, and free thinkers on the other, throw into the arena of discussion. The dogmatist says you must have a Deity above and separated (holy) from humanity; and so he constructs a God away off yonder who only reveals himself through some special heirarchy or body of doctrines. The free-thinker frankly says that he will never worship a man, that if he ever worships anything it will be God, pure and simple. And, very naturally, since there can be no such God, nor would he be understandable if he did exist, the free-thinker finds himself where perhaps philosophically he wants to be, i. e. without any practical demands from religion.

In the light of such alternatives, historic Christianity is frankly anthropomorphic. It says that man is God's best gift to man, and that in all ages, through prophets and priests and now in a special gift of himself, he still through man reveals man to himself. The creed does not hesitate to say, "He was born of the Virgin Mary," "He was made man," "He was crucified under Pontius Pilate," "He was dead and buried." It says much

more than this, of course, and reaches over in to the very essence of the divine life, but the revelation is human after all.

And from what I am able to learn it is a position that can be upheld along the most approved lines of reasoning. For instance, there is a narrow sphere which sets man off from everything else in the world — and that is the sphere of his own personality: his ability to know himself and others, with affection, faith, loyalty, and other well known functions. It is what your little child has, and your sewing machine and automobile do not have. It is that which in her you love here, and wish to see persist after the frail body goes back to ashes. Everything else clusters around that functioning. It is the divine element in humanity, and so far as we know exists alone in mankind.

Now the approach to this personality is also narrow. It is limited on two sides. First, nature can teach it little or nothing, because nature is of a lower order. If Robinson Crusoe had lived long enough on the island, he perchance would have gone mad. All the beautiful nature about him would have meant little or nothing to him without humanity about him. And those who talk a lot about the "inspiration of nature" as taking the place of religious inspiration ought to have to

live like Crusoe, on a beautiful island — alone. I feel sure that when they came back after a few months it would be with a rearranged theology! The inspiration of nature is æsthetic rather than religious. The lessons are all on a distinctly lower plane.

Then the approach is limited on the supernatural side, just as on the natural side. Miracles as such have very little value for the satisfaction of personality. It is often harder to understand the miracle than the lesson it is supposed to teach. Jesus himself places them on a distinctly lower plane: "They have Moses and the prophets, and if they will not believe them, they will not believe even though one rose from the dead."

The avenue of approach to our highest natures is, after all, *through humanity*. And that is exactly what we find in the religion of Jesus. When God wished to reveal himself in an adequate way to his children he humbled himself, was born of a virgin, and became a man, and dwelt among us, and was tempted in all points like as we are. There is, then, nothing strange, but something infinitely refreshing, in the idea of the Incarnation.

PITFALLS

As a free-will carries with it attendant dangers, so the very possibility of living the largest kind of a life, in the religion of Jesus, in a liberal faith, has accompanying pitfalls. Those dangers are that it may mistake liberty for license; that it may be too tolerant; that it is apt to be hesitant and afraid. There is a liberty that leadeth unto life, and there is a liberty that leadeth unto death.

But there are so many things to be believed, there are so many things for which we may stand positively, there are so many restraints that lead to dynamic power, that the man who pities himself either for lack of truth in the world or for something to strive for, has only himself to blame. He who can live in a world of light and joy with only blackness in his heart has somehow lost his way.

CHAPTER V

JESUS AS THE FULFILLER

"I am come not to destroy the law, but to fulfill the law."— JESUS.

Thus Jesus put himself in contact with the conditions of his own times. He brought no cataclysmic cure-all. He was radical — *as radical as love;* he was constantly surprising; he sometimes seemed to his own people blasphemous. Yet he must be judged largely by his own estimate of his aims, and that estimate was one of the Fulfiller. He went himself, and advised his followers to attend the Synagogue. He sent some to the priest. He was not an iconoclast. He created no new religion, either in an institutional or doctrinal sense. He wrote no sacred book, like Mohammed or Joseph Smith or Mrs. Eddy. He did not even commit to writing his own sayings, like Confucius. He completed no hierarchy. To plant his feet upon he took the historical background, such as it was; it might conceivably have been something very different.

The interesting point for us of this day is

that his principle was one of fulfillment. His face was always toward the future. His work was always the work of today. He then found the point of contact. And may that not mark the new way for us? Long since any arbitrary schemes we may have had have failed. Any titles we may have conferred on Jesus are but temporary, and in time they are apt to give more trouble than help, even that one which was added earliest of all (Jesus "Christ" — Jewish Messiah). Jesus hesitated to take this title. Different titles have served in different ages, even as it is. What Jesus has meant to various ages may give us a glimpse of what he may mean to us and to the future. Let us see.

The highest thought of Judaism was Messianism. It was a variable quantity, but always embracing the hope that God would incarnate himself and dwell with men. With the Jews it was always more or less anthropomorphic, always more or less nationalistic. Jesus was more, of course, than the Messiah of the Jews, and he did not pretend to identify himself in every particular with their Messianism. He replied to them once when they asked him: "Thou hast said." And anyone may discern how he magnified the Messianism they held, and spiritualized it. But his Jewish disciples (for all the early disciples were Jews) at once iden-

tified him with the highest message of Jewish life and philosophy. And he, at last, permitted it. Was he justified? Certainly. He fulfilled it, spiritualized it, galvanized it into life. This is evident when we remember that since his day Jewish Messianism has never meant anything except as it has persisted in him — an exceptional tribute and leadership. But the permanent message of Messianism may not mean much to us; it may, indeed, be a stumbling block unless understood in historic perspective. Jesus is the Messiah of the Jew — and very much more.

The noblest doctrine of the Greeks was the Logos, or eternal wisdom. The effort of Greek culture was to make a man so wise that he would live accordingly. It was and is a really great doctrine. The finest moral insight in all ancient philosophy is to be found in the Greeks such as Socrates, Plato, and Zeno. St. John at once identifies Jesus with this Logos: "In the beginning was the word (the Logos) and the word was with God, and the word was God — and THE WORD BECAME FLESH AND DWELT AMONG US." Jesus was more than the Logos of the Greeks; he was its FULFILLER also, enriching it with his own unique personality. St. Paul makes contact with their god whom unknowingly they worshipped, complementing it with the Christian

message. It is worthy of note that it never meant anything to the world as a separate philosophy after Jesus came into contact with it. It was literally swallowed up in the beautiful spirit of his empiricism.

The next great effort of humanity was monasticism. It is unfortunate that we only know the latter end of monasticism, when it was ænemic, if not actually sluggish and vile. In its first efforts it was dynamic with the spirit of re-invigoration. Whatever of the old civilization there was had largely gone to pieces, and the impact of the new barbarians from the north made a pitiful thing to call civilization. It was rather a job-lot or a *pot-pourri.* There were two great needs — education and the spread of goodness. The brutality of the north, with its great, unused energies, needed to be soothed and made human and merciful. The ignorance everywhere needed to be scattered. Charlemagne could not read nor write. The monks banded themselves together, and took up the prodigious tasks of humanity. They preserved old manuscripts and made new ones. They taught the children, such as they could gather about the schools. They preached righteousness and tamed the followers of Attila and Genseric. We may say what we will about later monasticism; in its early efforts it was perhaps the only kind of

method which could have faced so overmastering a problem. And who, pray you, was the central figure in that effort? Where did it find its inspiration? Around what pagan philosopher did it gather its formulæ? There is only one figure in monasticism — the suffering Saviour of mankind. Jesus was to them neither the Messiah nor the Logos primarily, but the suffering Saviour, acquainted with grief and merciful. In this period of regeneration he was the Big Brother.

Justin Martyr retains a high estimate of his Greek friends after his conversion, by persuading himself that Heraclitus, Socrates, and many Stoics were virtually Christians since they had been enlightened by the Logos, later to be more perfectly revealed in the person of Jesus. So Dante places Virgil and many other pagans in Purgatory, some of them with higher places than popes and prelates. St. Paul dares to place Jesus in unison not only with Messianism, but with the highest and best things and persons: "For all things are yours, whether . . . the world, or life, or death, or things present or things to come: all are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's."

And in this these leaders of early Christianity were entirely correct: Jesus is more than a deified man, more than the Messiah of the Jews, or the Logos of the Greeks, or the

dogmas of the Church; he is the eternal struggle for good. Once Lanfranc related to Anselm, Abbot of Bec, the story of the death of St. Alphege, an English Archbishop of Canterbury, who was killed by the Danes. They had offered to spare his life if they were paid a ransom. He rejected the offer because he knew he would have to take the money from the poor of his diocese. Lanfranc said that Alphege ought not to be called a saint and a martyr, for he had not died for Christ. "But," replied Anselm, "to die for righteousness is to die for Christ."

This understanding of Jesus opens up tremendously interesting questions. Are we justified in exercising the wonderful eclecticism that Jesus himself lived by? For many centuries his message has been wrapped up with such terms as Messiah (Christ), Lord, King, Saviour, Logos, Son of God — all of which are, after all, local and historical expressions, growing out of the soil of language and experience. If Socialism should mould into the language of the world the word "comrade," would it be possible for us to say "Jesus, the Comrade," as we now say Jesus, the Christ? Why not?

The word "comrade" has implications never dreamed of in Messianism? It is universal, personal, compassionate, loving, constructive.

It seems, indeed, to be in line with the thought of Jesus: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." "Go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor." It fits in with the message as understood by the early disciples, when they brought all that they had and laid it at the apostles' feet. And while Jesus hesitatingly accepted the Messianic role, and all other doctrines are clearly deductions, he never hesitated to be the "comrade": "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another, even as I have loved you." Shall Jesus still be wrapped in the swaddling clothes of the ages? We hear of him now only under terms ancient, medieval, and feudalistic. Shall we thus think of him only, or as the Fulfiller? The first seems to put him in line with the other merely human founders of historic religions; the latter to give him his rightful place in the Divine Order of Life.

Thus fascinating implications arise around the person of Jesus. He himself becomes more than the deification of a man; he is the synthesis of all God's works. He is more than Dionysius, who theoretically rises from the dead; he is the resurrection and the life. His name is no mere talisman; "to die for righteousness" is, as St. Anselm says, "to die for Christ." He is more than any theory of wisdom either Jew or Greek; he is the Way, the

Truth, and the *Life*. Thus he manifests himself today in mind and medicine, in tree and herb, in intellect and affection; in him all things become ours; whether the world, or life, or death, or things to come, all are ours and we through him are God's.

And for our destiny the implications are no less suggestive. All things become ours. We theocratize the world. It becomes our Father's house. Nature is his and wisdom is his; the projection of personality is his; the movements of virtue and affection are his, as they are God's. As God is back of all, so Jesus is in unison with and the inspiration of the great advances. Nor are we a thing apart. The world cannot be estimated without every individual — apart from you and me. The secret shortcoming which we thought our own, is not our own; it is against God, against the world, against the cosmic order. The humble virtue of the peasant is an asset of all time and all things. So the true advancements of science and agriculture and domesticity, as well as of morality and belief, are things through which we may glorify God and find our place in the Eternal Order.

Jesus is the radical of all the ages. He is the iconoclast of love. There is nothing more radical than love. It pursues its way without fear, and one could almost say without favor.

It is the new wine which many times demands new bottles. Love is like the instinct of being born — pain and travail are its incidents; life is its ultimate. Jesus is as radical as love and life.

GOD PERSONAL

Religion and life hinge upon a belief in a personal God. Divine Immanence, Pantheism, and Nirvana are all good, but they are only partial aspects of the life of God, and the lesser ones at that. The one tremendous and momentous fact in the world is personality — the personality of man. Anything less than this, therefore, in any concept of God is unphilosophic, and eventually degrading to the human spirit. I know people who say that they do not worry over the future life. But they usually say that in the heyday and springtime of life, full to overflowing with the exuberance of the very personality whose value they so belittle after a few short years.

What would you take for the personality of your little girl? Give her good health, the power of locomotion, everlasting existence, everything, except her knowledge of you and your knowledge of her? What would you take, and have that be the case? Nothing in all the world. If you believe in God, then, what is the least attribute in that picture? Is it not personality?

CHAPTER VI

JESUS AND THE RELIGION OF TOMORROW

"I am the door: by me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and shall find pasture. . . . I am come that ye might have life, and that ye might have it more abundantly."— JESUS.

When Henry Van Dyke delivered the Beecher Lectures on Preaching at Yale in eighteen hundred and ninety-five, he entitled them "The Gospel for an Age of Doubt." It is a very difficult thing, admitted by all, to discern and describe adequately the spirit of any generation. Dr. Van Dyke was perhaps correct in the use of the term "An Age of Doubt" as describing a certain transient phase of our development. At any rate there has been a perceptible change since eighteen hundred and ninety-five, and our age might be more properly described as "An Age of Belief." Not that men have come to accept dogma in its medieval or even eighteenth century sense. But men today, while keenly inquisitive, are reverent and constructive thinkers. Many things, indeed, which have continued to exist

apparently only because they were old, are being discarded, but the outlook everywhere is constructive, intelligent, and consonant with the highest abilities of men and the noblest processes of the divine Life. It is indeed an outlook that is a Vision.

Presented with a dilemma of Rationalism or Vision we must, of course, choose the Vision. Vision has within itself all those divine instincts that have brought Reason into play in our lives, and the Vision can never be lost except at the price of a weakened Rationality itself. But the present age does not see any dilemma at all. Reason must ever be led by Vision, and Vision in turn must be buttressed in the sure things of increasing knowledge.

The heart of our present attitude is to be found in an ancient formula γνῶθε σεαυτόν (know thyself) — a vision which the Greek glimpsed, but never came into himself. It was Pope, I think, who said, "the proper study of mankind is man." When Jesus said, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free," he was forced to modify it and make it practical and personal by saying, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life." Real knowledge is personal, intimate, inquisitive, casting the beam from its own eye before it can see clearly to take the moat out its brother's eye. This is an age, I do not think it too much to say, that

is coming to know itself. This is an age, we cannot say, that has found, but is finding itself.

Jesus is bound to mean more to this age in which we are living than in any other preceding age. I hope I may say that without any sense of self-complacency. The nexus is this new knowledge and attitude that we have gathered up in ourselves. Jesus is reported to have come into the world in the "fullness of time." It is a pragmatic fact that he does not now come into the world until in some sort of fashion we are prepared to receive him. The corollary is also true — that every age sees Jesus with its own "specs." Truth is an ever-existant and complete entity, but our apprehension of truth is a variant, depending on our culture, using culture in its widest sense. So Jesus stands, the Ideal, the Vision, the Dream of all who love and hope, but our apprehension of him is measured by the "thing we are."

Lest I be misunderstood, let me say that I do not think our age has reached millennial perfection. I am not one of those who join in deifying the Crowd. I want to register what we are, and look at Jesus as we may be privileged to see him in that new light. Nevertheless I do stand sponsor for this age as the best age, this year as the best year, and this hour as the best hour of all the ages and years and hours that have passed.

In view of this I want to say that the religion which is ours today, and which is more and more to be the religion of the coming years, is a religion which may be described as an *up-standing* religion. It was foreshadowed in these words of our text and many others of Jesus, especially in his later life. The thought behind it and through it was that of the abundant life — natural and abundant: "If any man shall enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and shall find pasture . . . I am come that ye might have life and that ye might have it more abundantly."

I know that there is a cheap sort of piety, a sort of self-disclosure and self-humiliation, which is abhorent to all of us. But it does seem to me that we should hold our religious faith with at least as much vigor and frankness as we do, for instance, our political faith. Here are a man and his wife celebrating their golden wedding anniversary. When you go into their home, though age is coming on, they beam with joy. They show you the old pictures — the farm where they were born, their first modest house; they get down the photographs of their children, and tell the accomplishments of each. They are not ashamed of what they have done; the abundant nature of their lives is written in their faces. And what we know is that back of it all there was work,

and care, and doubt, and ambition, and culture, and enlightenment. Nor should it be otherwise with religion. Religion is what we are — more even than the measure of a golden wedding anniversary. It is worthy of ambitious and clear-sighted effort. Patience and humility are absolutely evil unless linked with vigor and knowledge and direction. It was Jesus who said, "The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a man seeking goodly pearls (the good life is a pearl) and having found one of great price, he went and sold all that he had and bought it." It was so good that a man would be justified in seeking it with all the zest of a merchant of gems; it was as fascinating not only as a trade or profession, but as the romance of priceless jewels. It was a worthy and justifiable and manly thing.

It is a pity that there are a good many men in the Church today who, if Jesus were on earth, would counsel him to go a little more slowly! Jesus himself was the most upstanding of men. You cannot imagine him as being afraid of anybody or anything. Kind and considerate? Yes. But unafraid. His step was almost — gay. His touch was as light as a child's caress. His spirit was rich and wholesome and forward-looking. In a word, and this is an interesting fact when you come to think about it, Jesus acknowledged *no sense of*

sin in himself. We may even accept the traditional explanation that Jesus was different, but it nevertheless follows that one of the best ways to ruin the efficiency of the religious life is to dwell on the sinfulness of our human nature, or to affect a theological humiliation which is mechanical in the very nature of the occasion and the life we are living. May it not be that the thing for us to do is not to worry over our sins, but to pray for some of the confidence of Jesus.

In line with this, the religion of our age will be *inclusive* and *comprehensive.* Edwin Markham has a fine figure which symbolizes what I have in mind:

> "He drew a circle that left me out —
> Heretic, rebel, a thing to flout.
> But love and I had the wit to win;
> We drew a circle that took him in."

Every circle is imaginary except the circle that includes all humanity and total reality. Thus the ancients used a circle to denote God. This is shown by the wholesomeness of some of our practical efforts. We are beginning to see this in our prison work. We used to think it enough if we put men behind the bars. We cut their hair, put a striped suit on them, and humiliated them by locksteps and other ingenious indignities — only to find that, in the end, when they got out, they were a thousand

times more the children of darkness than when we put them in; and the community suffered. What we are finding out is that we must include them in a very vital way in the total scheme of redemption, and that the long, long way of loving purpose only can win. We agree with Herbert Spencer when he says, "No one can be perfectly free till all are free. No one can be perfectly moral till all are moral. No one can be perfectly happy till all are happy."

I think that you may have guessed that the kind of inclusiveness of which I speak is not related to a mere spirit of toleration. In fact I think it would be intolerant of many things. You may have heard of the man who spread himself out so much that he was pretty thin everywhere! It isn't that kind of inclusiveness. It is a matter only for constructive work and loyal men.

There are in fact just two approaches to every problem: one is partial, immediate, short-sighted, authoritative; the other is long-drawn-out, coöperative, entailing much consideration, demanding faith in its highest sense. Under the former, master and slave is a good arrangement of human society rather than long drawn-out labor and capital contests; paternalism in government is better than the everlasting struggles of democracy; war is better than diplomacy and arbitration. It makes great use

of fear, and asks for immediate results. It lacks faith in human nature, and is superficial in its thinking. It has about it all the earmarks of the self-sufficient, comfort-loving, dog-in-the-manger attitude of some fathers we remember with instinctive affection, but from whose roof-trees we were mighty glad to escape. It regards humanity as a *perpetual child.* It gilds itself with a good many platitudes, while stifling the free spirit and self-development of the individual. It tells the master to be "good" to the slave, and tells the child that the whipping hurts the father a good deal more than the child, which we perhaps all have heard and had our doubts about! It is full of all casuistry and pious dissimulation, side-stepping the real issue, which is the free and full-rounded development of the individual spirit in coöperation with all other free spirits.

The second approach is only for brave men and men of faith. Nearly all the sins we know have grown out of the great sin — lack of faith; faith in ourselves, faith in our fellows, and, ultimately, faith in God. There are no short cuts to character, and Christianity is character plus — character in the light of the long, patient, inclusive purposes of God.

Even at that, the second approach is more satisfactory in the end. The swimmer jumps off into the cold water, and at first he feels the

chill, and all the good things he has ever heard about swimming drop to zero. But after a few healthy strokes his body reacts, a warm glow suffuses his body, and off he moves in an ecstacy of delight. What we need most of all in our religion is the will to jump off, to trust ourselves, that we have the power to re-act — what someone has called "the will to believe." Any one can learn the strokes.

And just because we have had so little faith in ourselves, we have little faith in each other; and then, to paraphrase the words of Jesus, if we do not believe in ourselves and each other, whom we have seen, how shall we believe in God, whom we have not seen? Jesus believed this and taught it as no other man ever did. He saw in every man the germ divine:

> "For why should I pronounce his doom,
> When in my brother's heart may bloom
> The eternal flower?"

And, finally, our religion will be *forward-moving*, instinct with the finest sensibilities. The genuineness of Jesus is to be found just here, in its leading processes. There are three standards of life — and perhaps not another. First, law. It is the minimum. It is the swaddling clothes in which coöperative society begins its walk together. It deals only

with outstanding crudities and criminalities. It is negative and provides penalties.

Then there is morality. The word morality comes from *mos*, meaning custom, the plural of which is *mores*. It consists of the little niceties that people do over and above the law. But it always remains largely a matter of courtesy or nicety; it has in it no *grand passion*. Whatever is customary is right. If it were customary for every second father to cut off the toe of every male child, in obeying that habit a man would be moral. Where polygamy is the custom, a plurality of wives would be entirely moral. It is to be said, however, that the general rule of morality is something higher and better than law.

Above this, of course, is the realm of religion. It comprehends our ideal and aspirations. It is filial in symbol, the picture in Christianity being that of a good father and a good son. It assumes that there is "one divine event toward which the whole creation moves," and it believes in the capacity of men to achieve goodness, and that the proper instincts are naturally resident within us. It has no penalties except the long penalties of life and character. Religion, in a word, is made up of the directing forces of life, and its place is never at the tag-end of the procession. It is clearly not enough that the product of religion

should be the same from year to year, generation to generation, century to century. Religion has to do with the everlasting evolution and development of human life. Nothing less than real progress will suffice.

In the best sense in which religion is known, Jesus is its epitome. His moral grandeur, his beautiful spirituality, his dauntless courage, his forward moving step, his sure apprehension of life in its underlying realities, his love of life, all are unmistakable signs of his leadership. And unto himself he calls us.

A LIBERAL FAITH

A liberal faith is a great faith; it constantly, like the chick, breaks the old shell, and walks into new life. But, mind you, it takes the essence of the old life with it, leaving only the shell. A truly liberal faith leaves nothing of any value behind. It is not some mere tangent, a starting point, a divergence that means another sect. "These things you ought to have done," said Jesus, "and not to have left the other undone." A man who calls himself a liberal and slinks back out of sight in the face of some crisis, is not a liberal; he is only a coward. A man who calls himself a liberal and lives an openly bad life, is not a liberal; he is only a libertine. If a man calls himself a liberal and you can only tell that he is by the number of things he does not believe, he is not a liberal; he is only a doubter. A liberal is one whose blood is growing warmer, whose charity is growing broader, whose vision is growing clearer; who, in the last analysis, is deeply in love with life.

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